

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



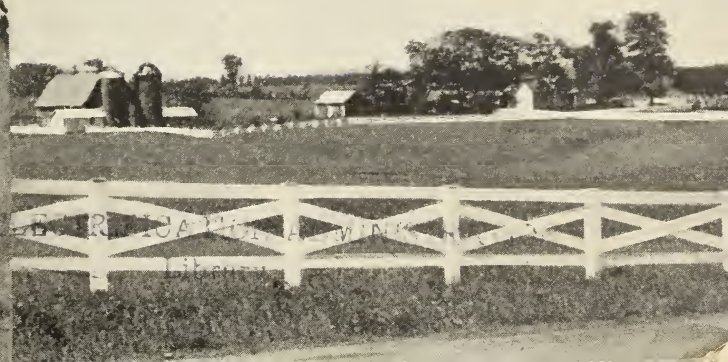
2 Country
a' 86be
cop. 6



HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE ?

DS₂

~~NATIONAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION~~
Library



This pamphlet is the second of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936-37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, non-technical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of current facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936-37 season on the following topics:

- DS-1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?**
- DS-2. How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?**
- DS-3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?**
- DS-4. Exports and Imports--How Do They Affect the Farmer?**
- DS-5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?**
- DS-6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?**
- DS-7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?**
- DS-8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?**

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

- D-1. A Brief Guide to Methods (revised 1936.)**
- D-2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums revised 1936).**

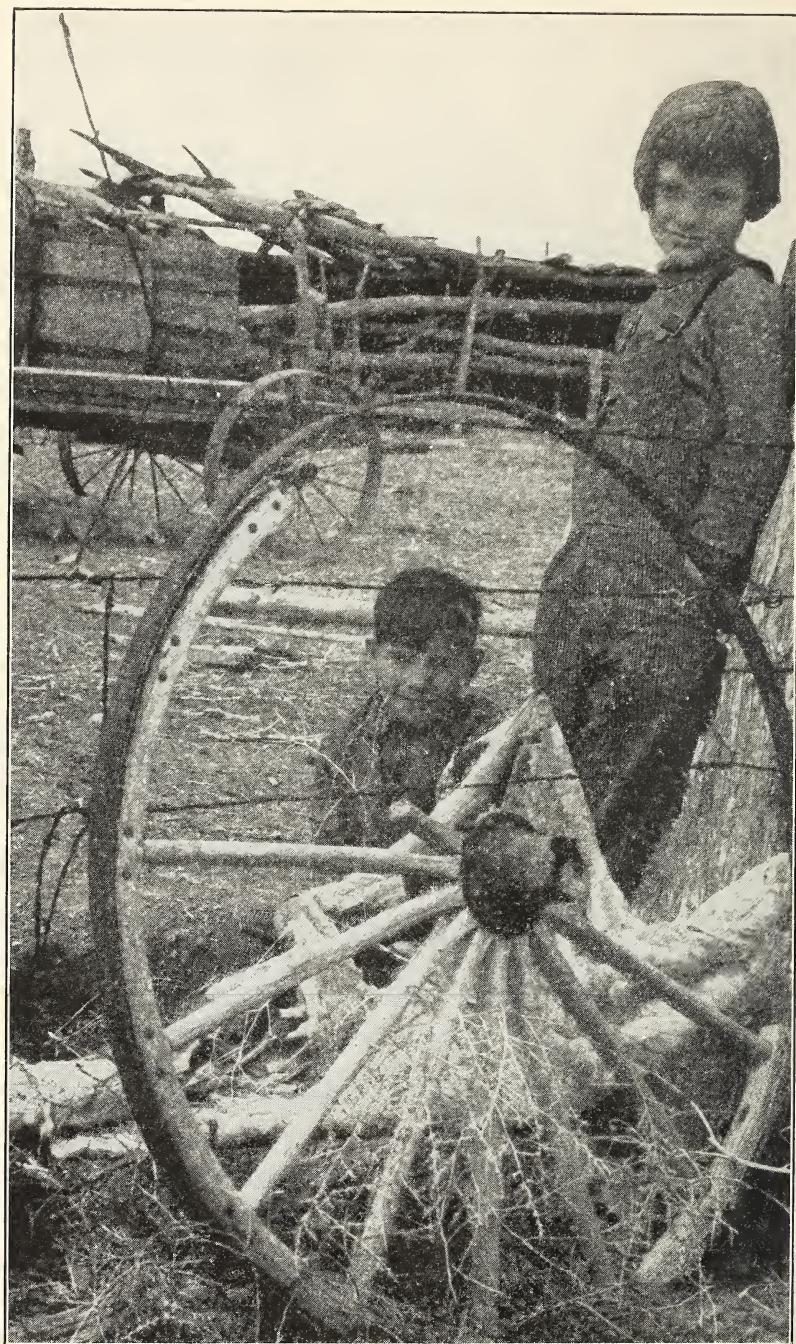
United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photographs by Resettlement Administration and Works Progress Administration)
December 1936

HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE?

The American standard of living is a much discussed subject. Some people think our standard is very good; some people think it isn't what it ought to be. Still other people think there is too great a difference between city and country living. How would you answer the following questions about the comparison:

1. What do you consider the greatest advantage of country life? The greatest disadvantage? Why?
2. What reasons would you give for the great range of living standards in the city? In the country? Are city slums any worse than rural submarginal areas?
3. How do rural schools compare with city schools?
4. How do rural and city medical facilities compare? How many people can afford to use present facilities as much as they need?
5. How can lowest living standards be improved?
6. What does unemployment have to do with lowered living standards?
7. How closely does the unemployment problem touch city workers? Farmers?
8. Where do you think today's farm boys and girls will find jobs? Why?
9. In how many ways are city workers and country workers dependent on one another?



How Green Will The Grass Be For Them?

HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE?

Some farm people think: "If we could only move to town, everything would be very much better for us."

Some city people think: "If we could only move to the country, everything would be very much better for us."

These two groups think the way they do because they are dissatisfied with conditions the way they are, and they want to better themselves. That is why in times of depression city people grow restless and begin to think about country life as a way to peace and plenty. That is why in good times farm people begin to yearn for the city's glittering lights.

ONE GROUP LOOKS AT THE OTHER GROUP AS THOUGH THE GREENEST GRASS WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE.

The thing each group overlooks is that NOT ALL THE GRASS on the other side of the fence IS GREEN.

When they do see this, they begin to wonder WHY THE GRASS ON BOTH SIDES IS NO GREENER THAN IT IS, and WHAT CAN BE DONE to freshen up the brown spots.

WHY DOES THE COUNTRY GRASS LOOK GREENER TO CITY PEOPLE?

There are always some city people who like the idea of moving to the country. But especially when times get hard and jobs grow scarce, the country looks like a place of refuge to more and more people.

In normal times if you asked a city man why he was leaving town for the country, he might reply: "Well, we like the idea of getting away from the noisy, dirty, overcrowded streets. We want to go where people have a

chance to breathe, a chance to live at a pace that isn't so fast and furious. We want our kids to learn independence and self-reliance, as well as cautiousness and thrift.

"THE FARMER GETS MORE SATISFACTION OUT OF LIFE than ordinary workers. He knows how to do a lot of different things. He makes things grow. It isn't like fastening a single kind of bolt in a factory all day long, or running a machine that pastes labels on cans all night. When the farmer's job is finished, he can feel that he's got a stake in what he's done, and his family a stake in the future.

"FAMILY LIFE MEANS MORE TO PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY. Families are bigger. They stick together better, and more children and old folks are about. Why, every average farm family raises twice as many children as a city family. That's because country mothers have more children, and because people just naturally live longer when they work out of doors. They tell me rural people can expect to live 5 to 7 years longer just because of being in the country. Now that's a comfort, especially when you know there's going to be plenty to eat!

"Speaking of plenty to eat, of course that's a real important item. It's plain enough that as between rich city folks and rich country folks one can eat just as well as the other. But in the country even poor folks can eat enough to give 'em strength for their kind of jobs. They get more greens and milk and butter and eggs—the sort of food that's good for growing kids."

In a depression period if you asked an average city man why he was leaving the city for the country, he might answer: "Food's the reason. Looks to me like LIVING IN THE COUNTRY IS THE SUREST WAY OF FILLING A FAMILY'S BREAD-BASKET.

"WHEN A MAN GETS OUT OF A JOB, IT'S BACK TO THE FARM FOR HIM. If you're about 40 they say you're not worth a tinker's dam. They don't even give you a chance to get old. While you're young and strong they'll

give you a job—if there are any jobs. But when they're through with you it's sink or swim! It's a lot better trying to grow a mess of turnips in your own garden than trying to be first in a bread line. In the city we can't stand it any longer—but in the country we can get a new start. We'll have something to hope for with our children."

In 1932, and in other years during the recent depression, for the first time probably in the Nation's history, more city people moved to the country than country people moved to the city.

MILLIONS OF CITY PEOPLE HAD THE IDEA OF GETTING A NEW START IN THE COUNTRY. The agricultural census counted 2,000,000 people living on farms January 1, 1935, who were not living on farms 5 years before. They pushed back to the farms where they came from, or started new farms one way or another. For several years the steady stream continued, until there were 500,000 more farms in 1935 than there were in 1930. But now the stream has reversed, and ONCE AGAIN RURAL PEOPLE ARE TURNING TOWARD CITY STREETS in growing numbers.

WHY DOES THE CITY GRASS LOOK GREENER TO COUNTRY PEOPLE?

It's a fact that city grass DOES look greener. Between 1920 and 1929 it looked greener to 19 million farm people—6 million more than the number of city people who moved to the country.

Like city people, many rural folks get tired of the place they live. They want to make a change, and the city seems to offer everything in the way of high-styled living.

If you asked some farmers why they'd like to move to town, they might tell you: "That's easy enough. Anybody'd get tired of milkin' a cow day-in-an'-day-out, rain or shine, hot or cold. It just gets plain tiresome feeding the chickens and the pigs. Of course, tractors have cut out feeding horses—but nobody's invented a machine to give milk yet!

"The city sure is the place for a fellow who likes to take in a movie once in a while, or go to some sort of musical affair. And you get more neighbors, and know more people—LIVING IN TOWN IS A MORE SOCIABLE WAY TO LIVE."

A rural woman might be apt to tell you: "Town is the best place to be because you can always get a doctor. Folks say having a baby is less dangerous there—and that's something to think about. If you need to go to a hospital, you know THE CITY OFFERS THE BEST THERE IS IN MEDICAL CARE.

"And there's another reason that's just as good: CITY SCHOOLS ARE VERY MUCH BETTER THAN RURAL SCHOOLS. There's hardly a mother anywhere who wouldn't want her children to grow up to be smart and well-educated. Fact is, it's getting harder and harder for folks without an education to make a living. Boys and girls have a better chance in city schools."

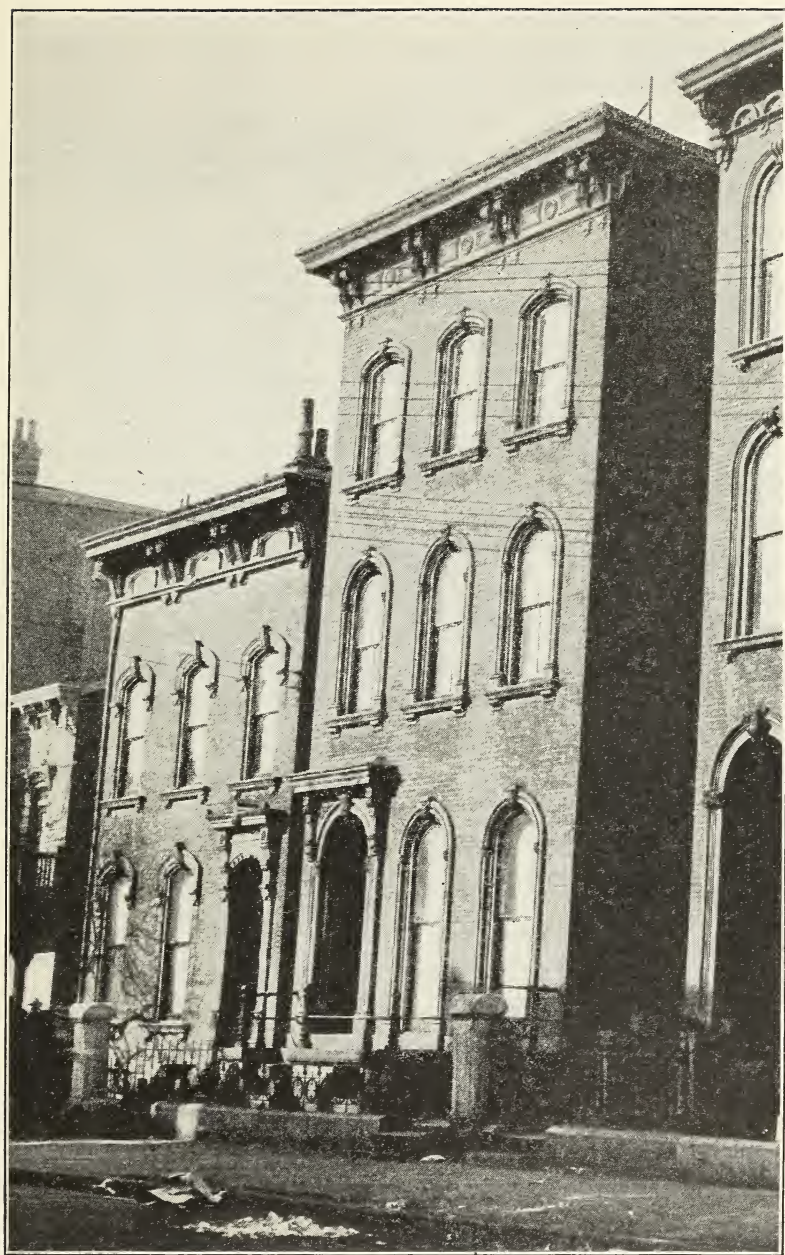
But the point appealing most strongly to farm people is the fact that they feel more money can be made in the city.

"Just look at the cash INCOME OF THE AVERAGE CITY PERSON," many farmers say. "Why, it's better than \$500 a year. That's a heap more money than the average person on a farm receives, having to get along on \$160 a year. Just plenty of country people would be sitting pretty if they had that much. It's reason enough for moving to town!"

HOW ABOUT THE BROWN SPOTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE?

Some people will agree immediately: "It's a shame that farm income is so much below urban income. It means THE FARMER HAS BEEN SELLING CHEAP AND BUYING DEAR."

"No, it's not such a shame," other people say. "The difference isn't as great as it seems. The farmer gets a great deal more for less money. After all, when you con-



Many City People Live Like This.

sider city rents and taxes, you see how much better off the farmer is. There's several hundred dollars a year cash value to the food produced and used on the farm, as well as the cash value of the extra labor the farmer ordinarily gets out of his own family."

"That may be so," the first group retorts, "but when you get right down to it, isn't it true that the FARMER PUTS MORE IN AND GETS LESS OUT THAN CITY FOLKS?"

"But WHAT farmers and WHAT city people are you talking about?" asks another group, stirring up a hornets' nest. "Certainly it's true the average city family gets more money than the average farm family. But saying it like that only tells HALF THE STORY.

"There are TWO GROUPINGS, more or less, both on the farm and in the city: The smallest number of farmers have the largest income, and the LARGEST NUMBER have the SMALLEST INCOME.

"It's the same in the cities. A FEW PEOPLE GET A GREAT DEAL MORE than the large majority.

"The kind of life you live in the city depends on the income class you're in. Even in 1928, thousands of city families had to live the meagerest sort of lives.

"And the kind of life you live in the country depends on the income class you're in, just the same as the city. Even in 1928, three-quarters of American farmers didn't have enough for what's considered a decent standard of living—and about one-half were in POVERTY.

"That sounds like a sort of tough dose to take," some people agree, "but it's plain as day that city and country are just alike in one thing: IT'S THE POOR PEOPLE WHO REALLY CATCH IT."

"But poor people in the country don't catch it as hard when it comes to eating. It's the city poor who can't afford to buy food enough for the work they do," it is pointed out. "That means they have to depend on cereals and cut down on meats and vegetables and even eggs and milk. It's easy to see why you read about thousands

and thousands of underfed city children having rickets and tuberculosis."

"Well, that ought to about balance the skimpy rural medicine as far as a bad point's concerned," other persons state, "though it's certainly true rural folks don't get the care city people do. They can't afford it. Even the old-fashioned country doctor has become just a character for the movies. And RURAL HOSPITALS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN."

"Why don't farmers in various small areas take care of everybody on the health-insurance plan?" cooperatively-minded persons ask. "Plenty of counties have tried the 'having a doctor by the year' idea and found they could keep a first-class doctor, have all the attention sick-folks needed, and yet come out cheaper in the long run. MEDICAL CO-OPS ARE JUST PLAIN COMMON SENSE for folks who want to stretch their dollars."

"But people don't think about cooperation unless they're trained to," interested individuals reply. "WHAT KIND OF SCHOOLS DO RURAL CHILDREN GO TO?"

Many a school teacher can answer that question. "Country schools vary," they are likely to say. "In poor land areas lots of schools are the out-of-date, one-room type of years ago. They have inexperienced teachers, too, who come and go almost with the seasons.

"And the depression made it even worse—for the good ones as well as the poor ones. Supplies were cut down, teachers fired, and terms shortened. Why, in a single year of the depression—1931—more than 2,000 RURAL SCHOOLS SHORTENED THEIR TERMS anywhere from one to eight months. Some closed up altogether. Rural boards cut down the number of school buses. In parts of the South the Negro schools were cut before the white, even though the white followed close behind as times got harder. But things are improving, now."

Many people are disturbed by what has been happening to rural schools. "ISN'T IT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT COUNTRY SCHOOLS BE MADE BETTER AND BETTER because more children are born in the country

than in the city?" they ask. "It's the rural surplus that makes up for the city shortage. And it's the unskilled and ignorant who are being less and less needed, and the unskilled who number greatest on relief rolls. Why couldn't the Nation as a whole help the country areas that can't help themselves? WE OUGHT TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE, and the cities ought to help pay for the education of their future citizens."

"Well, one way of looking to the future is by looking at PRESENT STANDARDS," remarks a young agricultural college graduate. "What kind of houses do you think rural boys and girls have to live in?"

"Throughout the whole United States only 1 farm in 9 has electricity furnished from a central station. Does that make it any easier to study? And how much spare time can farm folks have when something less than a third of American farms have their water supply in the house? And with half of these furnished by hand pumps? Is it any wonder that 73 rural houses out of 100 don't even have a kitchen sink with a drain—much less bathtubs?"

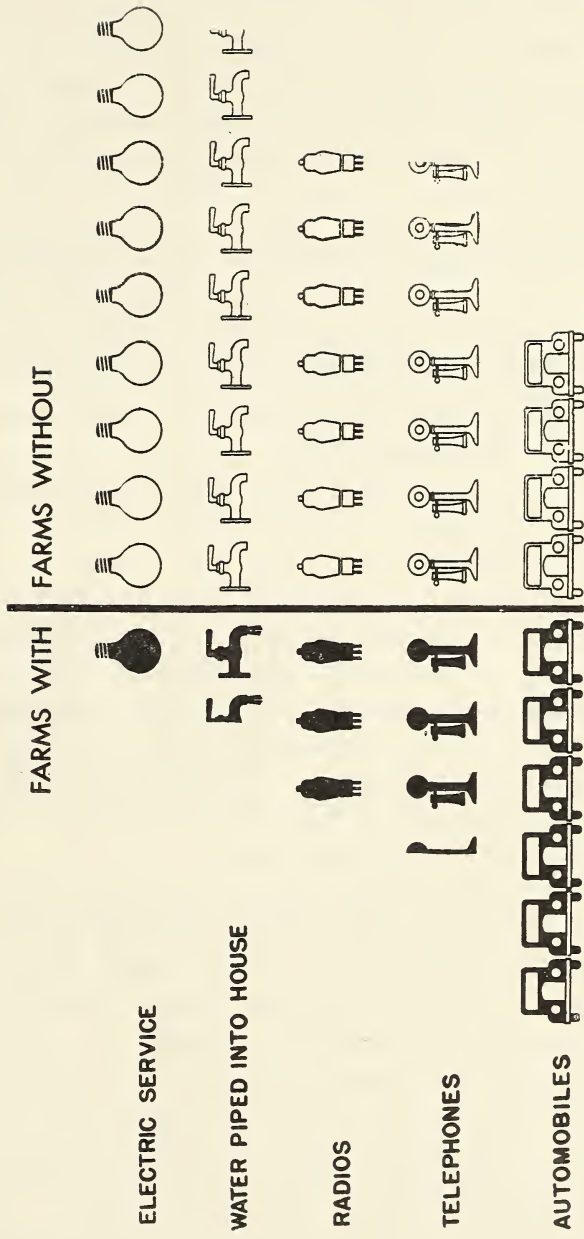
"But don't think the only place where people have to get along under such conditions is in the country: there are thousands of city houses with no electricity. And one of the rosy dreams of slum dwellers is some day to live where there's running water, a little sanitation, and a nice hot stove in winter.

"Things were like this back in the 'good old days' before 1929, before America got a real good start into the depression. Since then UNEMPLOYMENT HAS MADE BAD STANDARDS WORSE.

"At one time in 1935 every SIXTH person in the cities WAS ON RELIEF—11,250,000 urban people, and every EIGHTH person in the country—6,750,000 rural people. The two together meant that EVERY SEVENTH PERSON IN THE UNITED STATES WAS ON RELIEF."

"That makes it pretty plain city jobs are less secure than rural jobs," some individuals immediately point out.

AMERICAN FARMS ARE BEHIND THE TIMES



Each symbol represents 10% of all farms

"It's fine so many city people have moved to the country lately. They're better off than they were."

"But is it so fine?" they are asked. "The farms are already crowded, the good land all taken up. Many newcomers must find abandoned farms, or start out on land so poor they can't make a living. When they get into such straits, don't they become just as big a social problem as a city slum? Will they get enough of the right kinds of food? Have enough to wear? Be able to pay their debts and educate their children? Isn't it true that we already have more acres under cultivation than are needed—because PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY THE WHOLE AMOUNT OF WHAT ALREADY IS PRODUCED? Won't this competition make it harder for all farmers to earn a living?"

"THE SUBMARGINAL FARMER WEARS HIS SHOES JUST AS THIN AS THE SHOES OF THE UNEMPLOYED CITY WORKER."

"Just moving from the farm to the city, or from the city to the farm, offers no escape," thoughtful persons comment. "There are weeds on both sides of the fence, for neither side offers the broad green peaceful meadow people hope to find. The number of Americans on relief in both city and country shows that THE SECURITY OF EITHER WAY OF LIFE IS NOT VERY SOLID UNDER OUR ECONOMIC SYSTEM as it now operates.

"We mean," they go on, "we mean that THE FARMER HAS TO STRUGGLE WITH THE SAME PROBLEMS THE CITY WORKER DOES. Take credit: Now just look at the strain in owning your own home. Look at the excessive profit margins middlemen chisel out. Look at farmers stranded by drought—and the way factory workers are stranded when a manufacturer shuts down his plant. But worst of all: Look at factory workers thrown out of jobs BECAUSE THEY'VE PRODUCED OR CAN PRODUCE MORE THAN PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO BUY—and farmers who go broke because THEY TOO HAVE PRODUCED MORE THAN PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO BUY.

"City people and rural people plainly depend on one another. And plainly they are facing exactly the same proposition: HOW CAN WE USE OUR BUMPER CROPS OF SHIRTS AND WHEAT?

"When we figure that out, city and country standards of living will be closer together. MORE PEOPLE WILL HAVE MORE of the things they need."

What other points of comparison between city and rural life can you think of?

Is there any reason why farmers should not live as well as city people who have HIGH STANDARDS?

How closely should farmers COOPERATE with city workers in attacking problems AFFECTING THEM BOTH?

MORE ABOUT FARM AND CITY LIVING

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

- WEALTH—A MATTER OF LIFE AS WELL AS ECONOMICS. Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1936. \$0.15.
- THE ECONOMIC SCALE—UP OR DOWN? Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1936. \$0.15.
- HOUSING. Building America, 425 W. 123rd St., New York City. 1935. \$0.30.
- HOMES FOR WORKERS. Federal Public Works Administration. Superintendent of Documents. Washington, D. C. Forthcoming.
- TOWARD FULLER LIVING. A. Goldfeld. National Public Housing Conference, 112 E. Nineteenth Street, New York City. 1935. \$0.10.
- HOW THE OTHER HALF IS HOUSED. Rupert Vance. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. \$0.15.
- A PICTURE-BOOK ABOUT THE COSTS OF MEDICAL CARE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1935. Free.
- WHO SHOULD PAY THE DOCTOR BILLS? H. L. Ewbank and M. P. Anderson. Stencil Circular No. 174. Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Madison, Wis. 1936. \$0.05.
- FUNDAMENTAL FACTS ON THE COST OF MEDICAL CARE. I. S. Falk. Milbank Memorial Fund. 40 Wall Street, New York City. Free.
- THE ABILITY TO PAY FOR MEDICAL CARE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1933. Free.
- MEDICAL ECONOMICS. Brooks Quimby. Pollak Foundation for Economic Research, Newton, Mass. 1935. \$0.05.
- HEALTH. Building America, 425 W. 123rd St., New York City. 1935. \$0.30.
- SCHOOL MONEY IN BLACK AND WHITE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1934. Free.
- OUTLOOK FOR RURAL EDUCATION. National Education Association, 1201 16th Street NW., Washington, D. C. 1931. \$0.25.
- WHAT KIND OF RURAL LIFE CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE U. S.? Carl C. Taylor. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.
- THE OUTLOOK FOR RURAL YOUTH. O. E. Baker. Extension Service Circular 223, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.
- A FARM IN ILLINOIS: GEORGE WISSMILLER'S 400 ACRE PLANT. Fortune, Aug. 1935. (Mimeographed copies obtainable from the U. S. Department of Agriculture without cost.)
- SECURITY FOR THE MASSES. Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1936. \$0.15.
- SOCIAL SECURITY FOR SOUTHERN FARMERS. H. C. Nixon. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. \$0.15.
- INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL SECURITY IN THE SOUTH. R. Hood. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. \$0.15.
- WHERE THE TALL CORN GROWS. E. H. H. Holman. Northern States Cooperative League, Minneapolis, Minn. 1934. \$0.10.
- YOUTH ON RELIEF. Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.
- ON RELIEF. Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.
- RELIEF AND THE SHARECROPPER. L. P. Davis. The Survey Graphic. January 1936. 112 E. 19th St., New York City. \$0.30.
- THIS QUESTION OF RELIEF. Public Affairs Committee, National Press Building, Washington, D. C. 1936. \$0.10.
- PLANNING FOR ABUNDANCE. G. Soule. Plan Age. February 1935. 744 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C. \$0.20.